



EXHIBIT 7
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HB 253

National Parks Conservation Association
NORTHERN ROCKIES REGIONAL OFFICE

January 29, 2009

Testimony by Tim Stevens, Yellowstone Program Senior Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, on HB253, the Montana Wild Buffalo Recovery Act.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association and our 325,000 members nationwide and 2,500 members in Montana, I support HB253, the Montana Wild Buffalo Recovery Act.

Founded in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association works to protect and enhance America's national park system for present and future generations.

NPCA and our members care deeply about this icon of America's National Parks, and we have been working diligently to bring practical solutions to the table that will help resolve the confounding issues surrounding bison management and assure protection of Montana's Livestock industry.

Not only is the bison a symbol of the National Park System and our nation's first national park, but the presence of a healthy, abundant bison population is an economic boon to the Yellowstone region. Yellowstone is experiencing a significant growth in visitors who offer wildlife viewing as the primary reason for their visit. Fully 57% of Yellowstone's visitors cite seeing bison as their main reason for visiting the park and wildlife watchers spent \$82 million in the Yellowstone gateway region in 2004.

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After the past several years, it is clear that a change in how bison management is needed. NPCA believes that allowing the state wildlife management agency and the wildlife professionals they employ the authority to manage wild bison is a reasonable and safe step forward that will serve both wildlife and producers.

We believe this bill will allow a broader range of management tools, and will also continue to maintain separation between bison and livestock.

NPCA has, and will continue to support, significant steps to work with landowners to provide additional opportunities for bison while maintaining this separation, and we believe having the MT FWP as the lead wildlife manager for all wildlife, including bison is a logical and reasonable step.

In conclusion, this icon of our national parks and the west is at a crossroads. Central to the future of Yellowstone bison is the recognition that they must be accepted as the wildlife they are and must be managed by the wildlife professionals within the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Tim Stevens

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